2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

conquests; that is, from 1342, the date of the first useful Arabic account (Gibb, 1929) to the end of the eighteenth century. My sources include English translations of the writings of Arab, Italian, Portuguese, Dutch, and French visitors to Kerala, works by English travelers, government servants, historians, and anthropologists, and a few historical works by Indian scholars who make use of indigenous Malayalam and Sanskrit documents.

Modern changes in Nayar kinship are not evenly distributed throughout the population. Some of the traditional institutions and relationships persist, especially in villages most remote from the seats of government and from modern market centers. Many other traditional usages are remembered by older people. Because of this, my own field work in three villages of Kerala—between November, 1947 and July, 1949—was able to provide me with the organizational framework into which to fit the literary material, and supplied me with many details on the traditional system not hitherto published.[2] Some information was also gleaned from genealogies, manuscript histories of particular lineages, and translations of Malayalam documents relating to land tenure, property transactions, and religious rites.

Modern changes in Nayar kinship comprise a large subject, which I have already briefly treated elsewhere (Gough, 1952*a*; see also Rao, 1957: 74–142). A full account will appear in a forthcoming book.

Ecology

Kerala, or the Malabar Coast, lies in the extreme southwest of India beside the Arabian Sea. The coastline is some 360 miles long, the area about 14,908 square miles. It is divided from the rest of South India by the Western Ghats, a mountain wall broken only in the center by the Palghat Gap. From prehistoric to modern times, migrations took place from the eastern plateau of peninsular India into the coastal region, but until the coming of modern transport the mountains prevented continuous contacts between the people who became established there and their neighbors to the east. On the other hand, its position laid Kerala open to contacts by sea with many peoples, including Jews and Arabs (from perhaps 800 B.C.), Egyptians and Phoenicians (ca. fifth century B.C.), Romans (first century A.D.), Chi-

[2] My field work in three villages of Central and North Kerala was made possible by the grant of a William Wyse Studentship from Trinity College, Cambridge, and of an Anthony Wilkin Studentship from the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. The preparation and writing of these chapters have been carried out with the aid of two grants from the Social Science Research Council, in 1954 and 1956.

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AW11 Kerala AW11
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*564 However alert one's discrimination may be, one may fall into possible error as I did here. "What caste do you belong to?" "I am a Nâyar." "What kind of Nâyar?" "I am a Nâyar." It may take some time to let in comprehension that the name of his clan is wanted, then the answer is "I am a good Nâyar" (one of a good or superior clan). At last he will say he is a Sûdra Nâyar, a Kiriyattil or whatever he may be. Again, many claim the Kiriyattil as their clan when they really have no right to do so, being inferior to it.

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*564

Ages ranging between 20 and 62.	Maximum.	Minimum.	Averages of 25.	To stature = 100.
Stature	178·6	154·3	167·0	...
Height, sitting	92·0	78·7	84·6	50·6
Do. kneeling	131·3	112·4	122·9	73·6
Span	190·0	164·7	177·8	106·5
Chest	95·8	70·6	81·3	48·7
Shoulders	42·8	36·9	40·3	24·1
Left cubit	51·4	44·3	46·9	28·1
Left hand, length	20·5	17·0	18·7	11·2
Do. width	8·9	7·6	8·2	...
Do. middle finger	12·6	10·4	11·9	...
Hips	27·8	23·6	26·3	15·7
Left foot length	28·1	23·6	25·7	15·4
Do. width	9·8	7·9	8·9	...
Cephalic length	20·1	18·2	19·2	11·5
Do. width	15·0	13·2	14·2	...
Do. index	79·0	68·0	74·0	...
Bigoniac	11·2	9·7	10·5	...
Bizygomatic	14·0	12·3	13·1	...
Maxillo-zygomatic index ...	84·4	77·0	80·1	...
Nasal height	5·3	4·0	4·9	2·93
Do. width	3·9	3·0	3·5	...
Do. index	87·5	61·2	73·1	...
Vertex to tragus	13·9	12·3	13·1	7·8
Do. to chin	21·5	17·3	19·8	11·9
Middle finger to patella	14·5	1·8	9·4	5·62

The individual, whose mid finger when standing at "attention" to the top of his patella gives the maximum measure, had a span which was 23·4 more than his height. In seven, the length of the left foot was greater than the breadth of the hips across the crests of the ilium. In ten, the nasal length was 5 cm. and over.

The statures of the first ten measured averaged 168·2 and the nasal index 76·6; otherwise the correspondence between the averages of 10 and of 25 is complete. Perhaps mixture of subjects belonging to the two sections

7:Gough E-5 (1947-1949) 1955 AWII Kerala AWII
Nayar

Sanskrit word meaning 'the noble one') the Malayalam word used by Nayars for the *genitor* and all lovers of the mother. The *appan* had no obligations to nor rights in a child except that, at his death, the child observed pollution. Nevertheless, Pālakkara informants stressed that the *appan* was a child's 'real father', as the *tāli*-rite was a woman's 'real marriage'.

In Walluvanād and Calicut a different custom prevailed. After the final feast, the couples repaired to the marriage shed, where each ritual bridegroom tore in two the loin-cloth which had been worn during the three days of seclusion by his bride, retaining one half and handing the other to the girl. This ritual divorce indicated that the bride, though still in the status of a married woman, was now free to cohabit with whom she wished. She might however still take as lover the bridegroom who had divorced her. In spite of the 'divorce', the bride and her children observed pollution at the death of the bridegroom. In those lineages where the *tāli* was tied by a man of higher sub-caste, no cloth was severed after the rite, but the bride-groom, being an elderly man, was unlikely to cohabit with the girl again. However, she must, with her children, observe pollution at his death.

At some periods and in some areas of South Malabar and Cochin it seems that the ritual bridegroom was forbidden to enter into *sambandham* with his bride. In 1510 Barbosa stated that the *tāli*-tier was sometimes a 'relation' of the girl, and in this case, when he had tied the *tāli*, he must go away 'without touching her nor more to say to her on account of being her relation'. If, however, he was not a 'relation', 'he may remain with her if he wish it, but he is not bound to do so if he do not desire it' (*ibid.* p. 124). Unfortunately, Barbosa did not define the categories of 'relations' who might tie the *tāli*, but the accounts of all other writers leave no doubt that the ritual bridegroom could never have been a matrilineal kinsman of the girl. It is probable that, the *tāli* being tied either by an *enangan* or by some elderly man of higher sub-caste from which the lineage was wont to draw lovers, the ritual bridegroom might sometimes be a man who had previously had relations with some older woman of the girl's lineage. In this case he would be prohibited from entering into *sambandham* with her by the rule which forbids a man to have relations, serially or concurrently, with two women of the same lineage.

Buchanan, an East India Company doctor, seems to assume that the *tāli*-tier must deflower the bride, but might never cohabit with her thereafter. In 1800 he wrote of South Malabar Nayars: 'The Nayars marry before they are ten years of age, in order that the girls may not be deflowered by the regular operations of nature; but the husband never thereafter cohabits with his wife. Such a circumstance, indeed, would be considered as very indecent' (Buchanan 1807, p. 411). But Buchanan's account may be untrustworthy, since he later says of North Malabar Nayars: 'The female Nayars, while children, go through the ceremony of marriage, both with Nambouries and Nayars; but here, as well as in the south, the man and wife *never* cohabit' (*ibid.* p. 513; my italics), thus contradicting his earlier statement that the 'bridegroom' must deflower the bride. However, Logan (1887, p. 135), though he does not say whether the *tāli*-tier was expected to deflower the girl, states that in South Malabar the ritual husband might not solicit his 'wife's' favours in after-life.

Since I have not seen the *tāli*-rite, but relied on informants' statements, the above account is necessarily incomplete. I now add details provided by earlier writers.

For Cochin, Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909–12, II, pp. 22–9) reports that in privileged families, the Maharaja gave permission for the rite, and the woman's kin made presents to him and to important Nambūdiris before it could take place. In retainer-lineages where an *enangan* tied the *tāli*, the Aśān (military leader and, in modern times, schoolmaster) of the village must be present to give permission, and was paid money and foodstuffs by the woman's *karanavar*. Similarly, in a Walluvanād village I visited, the *tāli* was tied in the presence of the *kaimal*, who received gifts for his consent. N. Subramania Aiyar, quoted by Thurston &

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Thandans

community. It was confirmed that this name, meaning "headman", is really a title (like so many others in Kerala – Nayar, Panikkar, Kurup, Menon, etc.) by which the Tiyas of south Malabar are known. He also answered questions about *tarawad* and *kiriyam*, marriage rites and cross-cousin preference, the prevalence of polyandry in the community and the changing times, points which have all been accounted for in the first part of this chapter.

On the second day, I made out the family's genealogy, which is given in the accompanying Table 3. A few words of comment are no doubt needed here. I had three informants in all, since two others were added, later, to the first. I have marked them as Nos. 1, 2, and 3. The generation to which the first informant belonged had originally consisted of nine children, from Kunji, the eldest, to Narayana, the youngest. Their *tarawad* was patrilineal and exogamous, as was also their matrilineal *kiriyam* in principle, but the rules of the latter were not observed very much any more beyond their immediate acquaintances. Kunji, now sixty two, was married at twenty; Kali, married when she was sixteen, divorced a year later and lived with her brothers; she was now sixty. All five brothers, when they were young, had been married polyandrously to Devaki, the eldest, Mayadi, now deceased, being sixteen at the time. Nani and Raman were issued from that marriage, and the young Raman and his family lived here, with his elder namesake in the same house. Devaki died when she was twenty nine, and the brothers were then all remarried, again polyandrously by their parents, to Kuniyama. Mayadi, then aged thirty, died the following year, and Raman senior became the *karanavan*.

Sankara then suddenly said that he was displeased with the common wife. He expressed a desire to break away, and asked his father and maternal uncle to find him another wife. There was considerable opposition to begin with, but, eventually, they gave in, and Kodamah was found for Sankara, who, however, did not move out and put up another household, but stayed in the family mansion with Raman. The latter retained Kuniyama as his wife and had four children by her – Krishna, Janeki, Kerthiyani, and Madivi. Sankara and Kodamah, now forty five and thirty five respectively, had one daughter, Devaki, whom they married off three years ago when she was sixteen.

The breaking away of their elder brother, Sankara, seems to have given Panju and Narayana ideas of liberty as well. Kuniyama was apparently not a very popular common spouse, or else Raman monopolized her too much – it was difficult to find out which, for all that I

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

It would appear, therefore, that, far from there being an excess of men, it is the other way round: there is a shortage of them. What happens then to the unmarried women? It was even more difficult to answer that question, as only a painstaking and lengthy investigation could do this. I enquired from my guides and interpreters, from those I interviewed, from officials and from fellow anthropologists, and the consensus of opinion, which I also share, is that the spinsters stay at home – with their parents, as long as they live, and with their brothers when the parents have died. The genealogies given above somewhat confirm this view, although perhaps not as decisively as one would like.

C. POLYANDRY IN A THANDAN FAMILY OF THE WALLUVANAD TALUK OF SOUTH MALABAR

While engaged in a general survey of polyandry in Kerala, in the course of which I came into contact with people of all sorts and conditions, in this complex State, it was not possible for me simultaneously to make a more special study of the distinctive features of the custom. At first, I really only obtained a superficial impression which, with time, I came to look upon as insufficient for me to speak with any authority on the polyandry practised by some of the distinctive castes and sub-castes of this south-west part of India.

Because I wanted to deepen my research and also out of a feeling that the opportunity to gather everything that I could while I was there should not be missed, I decided to choose one family from among those that I had already visited with my guides and interpreters, to put it under scrutiny and study its structure and activity in greater detail. Actually, I would have liked to have chosen one family in each caste or even sub-caste, but I soon realised that this meant work over a period of time far greater than I could possibly hope to have at my disposal in Kerala. So I resigned myself to enquiring where it was thought that I stood the best chance of making such a special study. I was advised to return to the Thandan family which I had first visited on the 25th and 26th of October, immediately after I had started to work in 1949. This family, it will be remembered, was called Appayl Wattakkeh, its *tarawad* had the same name, Appayl, and it was located about two miles outside the village of Ottappalam in the Walluvanad taluk of south Malabar.

The advantages of studying these people were numerous. They were close to where I lived, and to the residence of my interpreters. We had

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 A W11 Kerala A W11
Thandans

already been to see them twice, and I had become quite well acquainted with them. I had found the two younger men, Panju and Narayana, especially pleasant to talk to and, as they lived in polyandry whereas the rest of the family had given it up, it seemed most appropriate to get to know them better still. Appayl Wattakkeh too, appeared to be one of the few larger and well-to-do Thandan households in the neighbourhood willing to talk about polyandry. I began the special study of this family on the 11th of November, 1949, and went back repeatedly to visit them until my stay in Kerala came to an end in December of the same year.

I have explained earlier (p. 179) how all five brothers of the older generation had been married polyandrously to Devaki; then, when she died, how they had taken Kuniyama to be their new common wife, until Mayadi, the eldest husband, died, Raman became *karanavan* and Shankara broke loose to marry Kodamah, whom his father and mother's brother had found for him. This had seemed to give ideas to the two younger men, Panju and Narayana. Very soon, they too, requested that their maternal uncle provide them with a wife of their own, and they obtained her in the form of Nani, the present thirty five year old mother of their four boys, all born in polyandry.

The interesting thing about these two men was that, although they had not accepted the common wife whom they had previously shared with their elders, they had apparently no objection to polyandry as such, and were quite willing to remain wedded in this way, provided it was limited to them, and to a woman who pleased them both. I was naturally intrigued by this, and did not fail to ask Panju, who became my principal informant (No. 2 in the genealogy, Table 3, facing p. 179), what were his reasons for it. It took a long time to get from him that he was fond of his younger brother and that he had for the latter none of the feelings which he nursed against his elder brothers. Narayana, too, seemed happy with Panju, but there was perhaps more passivity in his case towards his partner than there was in the elder of the two men vis à vis his junior. Why had Nani had accepted the situation was more understandable: born and bred to expect that form of matrimony, she had raised no objection when it had been decided to marry her to the two younger members of the Appayl Wattakkeh household. She was the mistress of her home, too, since her husbands had put themselves up in a smaller house, separate from the rest of the family. She had thus no sister-in-law or mother-in-law to cope with, and seemed very pleased with the arrangement.

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWII Kerala AWII
Thandans

Panju and Narayana had taken their share of the two fifths of the common *tarawad* property undivided, as I have explained earlier, and this gave them a relatively more prosperous household in which to live and bring up their children. They were landowners in their own right, and not tenants like most of the Thandans in the area. This enabled them to work in their paddy fields for themselves, and in those of their brothers of the bigger house, and saved them from paying rent or giving part of the crop away to the *janmi* as others had to do.

Accompanied by my interpreters, I spent many hours in the courtyard of the Appayl Wattakkeh farmhouse, watching the work of the men, the domestic chores of the women, and the games of the children. I was obliged occasionally to question them and to press them for answers about situations which I did not have time to watch develop, although I would naturally have much preferred to remain simply a silent onlooker. By preference, I used to go them rather than get them to come to me, for I believed that if I saw them in their own setting, I got to know them better.

It appeared that each time the men of Appayl Wattakkeh had been married (three times in the case of Panju and Narayana, to Devaki, Kuniyama and Nani), there had been the customary arrangement between the two families and a public wedding ceremony. Money had been given to the fathers of the bride by the boy's father and maternal uncle, and cloth to her mother. For Nani, their mother's brother had given her eldest father (she had three) twenty eight *fanans* (or sixteen rupees, fifteen annas), and a piece of cotton material to her mother. In exchange, she had brought with her a dowry which consisted of two hundred rupees worth of jewelry, household brass vessels and two gold sovereigns. This was quite exceptionally good for the Thandan caste, I was told.

In all three marriages, the husbands had lined up with their common bride and drunk coconut milk with her, in the presence of the respective families and their guests. The ceremony had always taken place at the woman's house, and it was only after a few days that she had gone to live with her husbands. This period varied considerably, I heard; in some cases weeks and even months went by without the partners having any sort of marital relations. People were not in a hurry to consumate marriage in Kerala, it seemed.

I had read in Aiyappan's *Iravas and Culture Change*, p. 101, that when one husband was with the common wife, it used to be the custom that he leave his knife etc. on the door frame of the bedroom to signal

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949) 1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Thandans

124 Feeling that I would obtain more detailed information concerning the children from Nani than from Panju or his brother, Narayana, I proposed one day to interrogate her rather than her husbands. After some initial difficulties, the principal one being that men did not like to let her out of their sight, I did, nevertheless, manage to interview her in the yard of the Appayl Wattakkeh household. Even then, I could see that Panju was uneasy about it. I noticed that all the time he was apparently playing with his favourite son, Kumaran, he cast suspicious and displeased glances in our direction, and attempted to overhear what one of the intrepreters was saying. The other volunteered to help, and took to talking with Panju during these interviews, in order to entertain him and keep him occupied elsewhere. But this was never entirely successful and it was obvious that Panju fundamentally disapproved of my speaking to his wife directly instead of through his or Narayana's intermediary.

I have already remarked how much more pleasant and rewarding I had found it to question the women of Kerala rather than their menfolk. Nani was no exception, and she proved to be much more intelligent and willing in her answers than Panju ever was. Perhaps an explanation of her husband's distaste for my speaking directly to her is to be found in this: he vaguely feared that she would tell me things which she "ought not to", and which he confusedly thought wrong to let me have. Narayana was the same, and although he, too, pretended to play with young Sridaran, it was only an excuse, I think, to remain in the courtyard, to watch us and try and overhear what was being said.

862 Nani was still suckling the two year old Raghavan, her last child. I asked her when and how she would wean it, and she answered that she would do so when she would be two months pregnant again. She [298] would then apply *nux vomica* to her breast nipples and the bitter taste would make the child stop wanting her milk. She said that she obtained the product in the bazaar as a pharmaceutical drug, not as a natural product of the country. Some children were not put off by this method, she added, and for Kumaran she had had to put chicken dung on her nipples and tell him what it was that he was about to eat. In other cases, some mothers beat their children till they stop suckling, but Nani did not like to do this, although she knew that others did.

291 Loin cloths were not put on children until they were in their third [855] year. Before that they were allowed to run about naked. In Nani's opinion, they began to realise that there was a difference of sex only [864] when they were five. (This appeared to me to be somewhat in contradiction with the fact that children received their first clothes two years

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AWll Kerala AWll
Thandans

were definitely separated from each other, but they were already themselves shy in each other's presence, and tended to keep apart. I was surprised to hear the informant mention so long a period of latency, beginning too so early, but of course, what she said should not be taken too literally, there being a strong possibility that she was either mistaken or that she was giving me the information which she thought I would like to hear. She was also the sole source of what I learned in these matters, and I did not have an opportunity to check up on what I heard with any other woman. Still, I find what she told me to be worth mentioning, because it may be that, after all, children in Kerala do have a relatively longer period of latency than was to be expected in such a community.

I enquired about pre-nuptial sexual relations, but the informants, Nani and Panju, assured me that no such things existed. On the contraty, they said, virginity was very highly praised, not only in a girl but also in a boy. Here again, I have my doubts as to the accuracy of this reply, suspecting a knowledge of European ideals in such matters, especially those of the Victorian era. Since much that is British in India today still reflects this period, this may have influenced them to give me such an answer. It was added, however, that other, higher castes, such as Nayars, had no such prejudices, and because of this I have wondered if the information did not take the form that it did out of a desire to praise Thandans and show them up in a favourable light in comparison with Nayars. It was probably a combination of both that prompted them to take this attitude: they wanted to make out that their caste conformed to European standards in what concerned pre-marital sexual relations and was therefore superior to that of the Nayars, their immediate rivals.

I enquired privately, one day, what was the position adopted in coitus by this community. I was told that, contrary to what happened in higher castes where the man lay below the woman, with Thandans the man was always above. The contrary "was not favourable to the procreation of warriors", a strange remark I thought, considering that it was the Nayars who, in olden days, constituted the martial class. I had already heard about this particular way in which some castes in Malabar were reputed to have sexual intercourse, when I was working with the Todas in the Nilgiris during the summer of 1949. I will be giving an account of it in the chapter about these people.

The only point which my interpreter was willing to concede to the higher castes was that they were less inclined to homosexuality than the

12:Peter E-5 (1939, 1949)1963 AW11 Kerala AW11
Toda AW60
Tibet AJ1
West Tibetans AJ4

APPENDIX 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In all four fields of my ethnographical research, Ceylon, Kerala, the Nilgiris and the Himalayas, I was obliged to make use of informants and interpreters in order to carry out the work. Only in Kalimpong, when I had set up my headquarters there from 1950 to 1956, did I eventually do without interpreters, having learnt Tibetan sufficiently well towards 1952 to be able to dispense with assistance of this kind. Nevertheless, I remained, of course, dependent on informants.

To all these helpers in the field I am extremely grateful, because without their aid it would have been impossible to carry out the ethnographic study. Except for Kerala, where I have been expressly asked not to make any specific mentions, I would like to thank each and every one personally by name. In the case of the interpreter with whom I worked among the Todas, I would also like to give a short synopsis of his personality and life-history, because it appears to me essential that it is realized fully through what human medium the necessary information was gathered and contact with the tribe established.

In Ceylon, concerning Mr. G. H. Ellawala with whom I worked in Ratnapura, I cannot sufficiently express how great is my debt towards him. Not only did he take time off to accompany me to the dwellings of some of his poorest and most humble tenants (and all those of my readers who know the Orient will appreciate what this means), but he also acted as interpreter himself during our visits and supplied me with much honest and outspoken information in explanation of the material that I was gathering. Long after I had left Ceylon, he furthermore very willingly wrote to me additional data of which I was in need, replying promptly and fully to the, sometimes for him, obscure questions which I put to him about marriage rules and the patrilineal and matrilineal descent groups in the Kandyan provinces.

In Kerala, thanks to the kindness and hospitality of the managing director of the Metal Industries Ltd., Shoranur, Sri A. N. Poduval, I